City of Seattle

Department of Planning and Development
D. M. Sugimura, Director

CITY OF SEATTLE
ANALYSIS AND DECISION OF THE DIRECTOR OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Application Number: 3012116

Applicant Name: Eric Aman for City of Seattle Fleet and Facilities Dept.

Address of Proposal: 2800 15th Avenue W

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTION

Land Use Application to allow a new two-story, 10,000 sq. ft. public facility (City of Seattle, Fire Station 20) in an environmentally critical area. Parking for seven vehicles will be provided on the site. Review includes demolition of existing structures (7,100 sq. ft.).

The following approval is required:

SEPA - Environmental Determination – (Chapter 25.05 Seattle Municipal Code)

SEPA DETERMINATION: [ ] Exempt [ ] DNS [ ] EIS

[X] DNS with conditions

[ ] DNS involving non-exempt grading or demolition or involving another agency with jurisdiction.

BACKGROUND DATA

Site and Vicinity Description

The subject site is located at the northeast corner of 15th Avenue W and W Armour Street. The site is zoned NC3-40 (Neighborhood Commercial Three with a 40 foot height limit) and is improved with two buildings and surface parking lot.

The area of the corner site is 16,950 square feet. Surrounding zoning is also NC3-40 to the north and south along the east side of 15th Avenue W. The west side of 15th Avenue W is zoned C1-40 (Commercial One with a 40 foot height limit). To the east, across a 16 foot wide alley, is an area of LR3 (Lowrise Three Multifamily) zoning with predominantly apartment multifamily uses in wood frame structures.

Proposal Description

The proposal is to build a new 10,000 square foot, 2-story, 2-apparatus bay station. Fire trucks will enter apparatus bay from 15th Avenue W and will exit by West Armour Street. Surface parking for 7 vehicles will be provided off 15th Avenue W in a secure parking area. Landscaping will be provided along each street property line, the alley property line and also in terraced landscaped sections along the north property line.

Seattle Design Commission

This proposal is subject to review by the Seattle Design Commission (SDC) because it is a City Facility. The Commission's role is to advise the project proponents in an effort to foster well-designed civic projects. The SDC supported the overall development proposal and program. For complete SDC actions and comments, the approved minutes from the meetings are available on the City of Seattle website located at;
http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/Design_Commission/overview/

Public Comments

No public comments were received during the comment period which ended on June 13, 2012.

ANALYSIS - SEPA

The initial disclosure of the potential impacts from this project was made in the environmental checklists submitted by the applicant dated May 2, 2012 and annotated by the Department. The information in the checklist, supplemental information provided by the applicant, project plans, and the experience of the lead agency with review of similar projects form the basis for this analysis and decision.

The SEPA Overview Policy (SMC 23.05.665) discusses the relationship between the City's code/policies and environmental review. The Overview Policy states, in part, "Where City regulations have been adopted to address an environmental impact; it shall be presumed that such regulations are adequate to achieve sufficient mitigation subject to some limitation". The Overview Policy in SMC 23.05.665 D1-7, states that in limited circumstances it may be

appropriate to deny or mitigate a project based on adverse environmental impacts. The policies for specific elements of the environment (SMC 25.05.675) describe the relationship with the Overview Policy and indicate when the Overview Policy is applicable. Not all elements of the environment are subject to the Overview Policy (e.g., Traffic and Transportation, Plants and Animals and Shadows on Open Spaces). A detailed discussion of some of the specific elements of the environment and potential impacts is appropriate.

Short-term Impacts

The following temporary or construction-related impacts are expected; decreased air quality due to suspended particulates from demolition, grading and clearing and hydrocarbon emissions from construction vehicles and equipment; temporary soil erosion; increased dust caused by drying mud tracked onto streets during construction activities; increased traffic and demand for parking from construction equipment and personnel; increased noise; increases in carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions and consumption of renewable and non-renewable resources.

Several adopted codes and/or ordinances provide mitigation for some of the identified impacts. The Stormwater, Grading and Drainage Control Code regulates site excavation for foundation purposes and requires that soil erosion control techniques be initiated for the duration of construction. Puget Sound Clean Air Agency (PSCAA) regulations require control of fugitive dust to protect air quality. The Building Code provides for construction measures in general. Finally, the Noise Ordinance regulates the time and amount of construction noise that is permitted in the City.

Most short-term impacts are expected to be minor. Compliance with the above applicable codes and ordinances will reduce or eliminate most adverse short-term impacts to the environment. However, some impacts warrant further discussion.

Air

The Puget Sound Clean Air Agency (PSCAA) regulations require control of fugitive dust to protect air quality and will require permits for removal of asbestos or other hazardous substances during demolition.

Greenhouse gas emissions associated with development come from multiple sources; the extraction, processing, transportation, construction and disposal of materials and landscape disturbance (Embodied Emissions); energy demands created by the development after it is completed (Energy Emissions); and transportation demands created by the development after it is completed (Transportation Emissions). Short term impacts generated from the embodied emissions results in increases in carbon dioxide and other green house gases thereby impacting air quality and contributing to climate change and global warming. While these impacts are adverse they are not expected to be significant due to the relatively minor contribution of greenhouse gas emissions from this specific project. The other types of emissions are considered under the use-related impacts discussed later in this document.

No SEPA conditioning is necessary to mitigate air quality impacts pursuant to SEPA policy SMC 25.05.675A.

Earth

The subject lot is located within an Environmentally Critical Area (ECA) potential slide and abandoned landfill. The following temporary or construction-related impacts on the environmentally critical area are expected: 1) temporary soil erosion; and 2) increased vibration from construction operations and equipment. These impacts are not considered significant because they are temporary and/or minor in scope (SMC 25.05.794). The ECA Ordinance and Director's Rule (DR) 33-2006 require submission of a soils report to evaluate the site conditions and provide recommendations for safe construction in landslide prone areas. Pursuant to this requirement the applicant submitted a geotechnical engineering study dated August 18, 2009 prepared by GEO Group Northwest, Inc. DPD Geotechnical engineers have reviewed the proposal for consistency with ECA regulations. As indicated in the checklist, this action may result in adverse impacts to the environment. However, due to their temporary nature and limited effects, the impacts are not expected to be significant. Codes and development regulations applicable to this proposed project, including the Environmentally Critical Areas Ordinance, Tree Protection Ordinance, Seattle Building Code, Stormwater Code, and Grading Code will provide sufficient mitigation and no further conditioning or mitigation is warranted pursuant to specific environmental policies or the SEPA Overview Policy (SMC 25.05.665).

Noise

The project is expected to generate loud noise during demolition, grading and construction. These impacts would be especially adverse in the early morning, in the evening, and on weekends. The Seattle Noise Ordinance permits increases in permissible sound levels associated with construction and equipment between the hours of 7:00 AM and 10:00 PM on weekdays and 9:00 AM and 10:00 PM on weekends. The surrounding properties are developed with housing and will be impacted by construction noise. The limitations stipulated in the Noise Ordinance are not sufficient to mitigate noise impacts; therefore, pursuant to SEPA authority, the applicant shall be required to limit periods of construction activities (including but not limited to grading, deliveries, framing, roofing, and painting) to non-holiday weekdays from 7:00 AM to 6:00 PM. Non-noisy activities, such as site security, monitoring, weather protection shall not be limited by this condition. Additionally DPD will evaluate other requests on a case by case basis to allow for emergencies, safety, or street-use related situations that warrant work outside of the construction hours.

Traffic

Construction of the proposed project will generate truck and vehicular traffic associated with excavation and associated earthwork and the delivery of materials. Pursuant to Construction Related SEPA policy authority the project will be required to create and follow a Construction Transportation Management Plan to reduce construction-related impacts. The specific elements of this plan will include the following:

- Document the expected extent of street, bicycle lane, and sidewalk or pedestrian path closures during construction, limiting them as much as possible;
- Identify construction haul routes;

- Limit truck trips to and from the site to avoid the peak hours of adjacent street traffic, specifically between 4 – 6 PM on weekdays;
- Document any proposed bus stop relocations;
- Indicate likely locations of construction worker parking.

Long-term Impacts

Long-term or use-related impacts are also anticipated as a result of approval of this proposal including: increased height, bulk and scale on the site; increased traffic in the area and increased demand for parking; increased demand for public services and utilities; increases in carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions; and increased light and glare.

Several adopted City codes and/or ordinances provide mitigation for some of the identified impacts. Specifically these are: the Stormwater, Grading and Drainage Control Code which requires on site detention of Stormwater with provisions for controlled tight line release to an approved outlet and may require additional design elements to prevent isolated flooding; the City Energy Code which will require insulation for outside walls and energy efficient windows; and the Land Use Code which controls site coverage, setbacks, building height and use and contains other development and use regulations to assure compatible development. Compliance with these applicable codes and ordinances is adequate to achieve sufficient mitigation of most long term long term impacts, although some impacts warrant further discussion.

Height, Bulk and Scale

The SEPA Height, Bulk and Scale Policy (Section 25.06.675.G., SMC) states that *"the height, bulk and scale of development projects should be reasonably compatible with the general character of development anticipated by the goals and policies set forth in Section B of the land use element of the Seattle Comprehensive Plan regarding Land Use Categories, …and to provide for a reasonable transition between areas of less intensive zoning and more intensive zoning."*

Less intensive zoning is present to the east; however, the proposed building exceeds code setbacks and is under height based on the allowed zone height limit of 40 feet and is across a 16 foot wide alley with an additional two feet of property to be dedicated. The station will reach a height of between four feet and less than 20 feet along the eastern, alley facade. Existing development on the east side of the alley is with a four story apartment building. The height limit in the LR3 zone there is 30 feet to the top of wall, and up to 45 feet with a pictched roof. The proposed dedication of two feet, a 16 foot alley and setbacks for any redevelopment of the lot to the east would provide a measure of separation sufficient to adequately mitigate height, bulk and scale impacts. No mitigation for height, bulk and scale is needed per SEPA policy.

Noise

The project is expected to generate operational noise from fire alarms, radios, emergency generator and sirens. Emergency response vehicles (fire engines, ladder trucks and aid vehicles) will use sirens when leaving the site. Alert systems called, "klaxon bells" are also used at fire stations to alert personnel that are outside of the building performing duties. The site is close to residential uses and these operational noises will likely be heard and could be especially adverse

in the early morning and in the evening. The Seattle Noise Control Ordinance exempts sounds created by fire alarms and emergency vehicles in that they are essential for a fire station. The fire department has indicated that the klaxon bells will be used as needed when crews are actively working or performing drills or similar activities on the front and back aprons. The remainder of the time these devices are kept disabled. The emergency generator will be routinely operated for testing and drills, and will be equipped with a sound-muffling steel enclosure which will reduce some sound generation. All these noises will be intermittent and of short duration, and are unavoidable; therefore, SEPA mitigation is not appropriate.

Other Impacts

Long term or use-related impacts on the environmentally critical area are also anticipated as a result of this proposal, including: increased surface water runoff due to greater site coverage by impervious surfaces; loss of plant and animal habitat. Compliance with applicable codes and ordinances will reduce or eliminate most adverse long-term impacts to the environment. No additional conditioning is warranted pursuant to SEPA policies.

Emissions from the generation of greenhouse gases due to the increased energy and transportation demands may be adverse but are not expected to be significant due to the relatively minor contribution of emissions from this specific project.

The other impacts such as but not limited to, increased traffic in the area and increased demand for parking; increased demand for public services and utilities and increased light and glare; are mitigated by codes and/or are not sufficiently adverse to warrant further mitigation by condition.

CONDITIONS - SEPA

Prior to Issuance of Building Permit

1. A Construction Transportation Management Plan shall be developed and submitted to DPD and SDOT for review and approval. The specific elements of this plan will include the following:

    - Document the expected extent of street, bicycle lane, and sidewalk or pedestrian path closures during construction, limiting them as much as possible;
    - Identify construction haul routes;
    - Limit truck trips to and from the site to avoid the peak hours of adjacent street traffic, specifically between 4 – 6 PM on weekdays;
    - Document any proposed bus stop relocations;
    - Indicate likely locations of construction worker parking.

During Construction

The following condition(s) to be enforced during construction shall be posted at the site in a location on the property line that is visible and accessible to the public and to construction personnel from the street right-of-way. If more than one street abuts the site, conditions shall be posted at each street. The conditions will be affixed to placards prepared by DPD. The placards will be issued along with the building permit set of plans. The placards shall be laminated with clear plastic or other waterproofing material and shall remain posted on-site for the duration of the construction.

2. All construction activities are subject to the limitations of the Noise Ordinance. Construction activities (including but not limited to grading, deliveries, framing, roofing, and painting) shall be limited to non-holiday weekdays[1] from 7am to 6pm. Interior work using equipment within a completely enclosed structure, such as but not limited to compressors, portable-powered and pneumatic powered equipment may be allowed on Saturdays between 9am and 6pm, provided windows and doors remain closed. Non-noisy activities, such as site security, monitoring, weather protection shall not be limited by this condition.

   Construction activities outside the above-stated restrictions may be authorized by the Land Use Planner when necessitated by unforeseen construction, safety, or street-use related situations. Requests for extended construction hours or weekend days must be submitted to the Land Use Planner at least three (3) days in advance of the requested dates in order to allow DPD to evaluate the request.

[1] New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Junior's Birthday, President's Day, Memorial Day, July 4, Labor Day, Veterans' Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day.

Signature: (signature on file) Date: November 8, 2012
Lindsay King, Senior Land Use Planner
Department of Planning and Development

LK:ga
KingL\MUP\SEPA\3012116 Fire Station SEPA.doc